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## READING FOR PLEASURE

Adventures in Reading, 28th Series

By

MARION BROWN



CHAPEL HILL

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THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARY



## **READING FOR PLEASURE**

Adventures in Reading, 28th Series

By

Marion Brown

Author of The Southern Cook Book



CHAPEL HILL

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARY

1954

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### PROGRAM I

### TWO NINETEENTH CENTURY WOMEN OF LETTERS

"The aim of the biographer is to make a man and his times come alive again." With André Maurois' pertinent assertion in mind, the principal subjects for this program have been paradoxically selected.

The George Sand of Maurois' Lélia was one of the most dynamic and controversial women of her, or any time. She travelled a painful road of emotional complexities, leaving behind her an assortment of conflicting legends about herself and her associates. On the one hand she was called ogress, female Don Juan, destroyer of men, and less than a woman; on the other, she was described as being over-benevolent, charming, kind, and a doting mother. Flaubert, her devoted friend, wrote, "You are a good, kind person even if you are a great man, and I am deeply attached to you." And a succession of lovers, including Chopin, Musset, Flaubert and Sandeau, as well as her own observation that "For a woman to cease to be a woman is productive only of inferiority," tempers the accusation that she was "less than a woman." Long after Chopin was gone, and her hair was greying, Sand's literary eminence and her charm drew brilliant men to Nohant, her manor in the province of Berry. Stalking through the halls like a "handsome man," smoking a cigar and wearing tasseled boots, she was still a dashing and romantic figure. Lélia, André Maurois has written a brilliantly successful biography of George Sand, her family, her illustrious friends, and her times.

Through her Selected Papers, edited by Dr. Louis R. Wilson, Cornelia Phillips Spencer presents "an unintentional Social History of North Carolina from 1865-1900," and a vivid picture of the post War and Reconstruction South. Her vigorous attacks against all enemies of social improvement, progressive legislation, sound economy, and the advancement of education; her condemnation of over-cautious retrenchment, and the "t'aint no use" inertia of her State and her "beloved South," led someone to say of her, "She is the smartest woman in North Carolina." On hearing the remark, Governor Zebulon B. Vance added, "And the smartest man, too." Though Mrs. Spencer wrote of the weighty matters of her day, she remained thoroughly feminine

in her approach to woman's place in Society. Through a weekly column in the *North Carolina Presbyterian* magazine she expounded on the manners, morals, and attitudes becoming to young ladies, and she crusaded for equality for women in educational and vocational opportunities—equality that was to be enjoyed, however, with "propriety and restraint." It was largely through the influence of Mrs. Spencer's writings that the University of North Carolina was reopened after the War. And, characteristically, it was she who climbed the steps of South Building to ring the reopening bell.

### 1. Lélia and Her Friends

Lélia, by André Maurois

Give a brief sketch of Maurois' life, and mention some of his earlier works.

Discuss the author's theory on "how to make a man come alive." (New York Times Book Review Section, December 27, 1953.)

Discuss the life and character of George Sand. Describe her background, her childhood, and comment on the influence of the English nuns who educated her as opposed to that of her gypsy mother.

Read a biography of Chopin, and discuss his relationship with George Sand and their influence on each other.

Do you feel that Maurois paints a convincing picture of his heroine and her times?

Additional Reading:

The Life and Death of Chopin, by Casimir Wierzynski

### 2. She Rang a Bell

The Selected Papers of Cornelia Phillips Spencer, edited by Louis R. Wilson.

Discuss Dr. Wilson's purpose and his method of selecting and editing

Mrs. Spencer's papers. Give a brief sketch of Dr. Wilson's career and of

his earlier publications.

Discuss the editor's comments at the beginning of each chapter, and show how they supplement the material in Mrs. Spencer's papers.

Give a biographical sketch of Mrs. Spencer, and describe the Chapel Hill of her day.

List the topics on which Mrs. Spencer wrote, and the magazines and newspapers to which she contributed.

Read passages from the book, choosing as many different topics as possible, and give a summary of the book as a whole.

Comment on the author's style, and on her choice of subjects.

Additional Reading:

The Woman Who Rang the Bell, by Phillips Russell Diary From Dixie, by Mary Boykin Chesnut

## PROGRAM II FICTION OMNIBUS

## Facing East

Last year's fiction writers produced a bountiful crop of novels which, as a whole, have been viewed by the critics with no great enthusiasm. In the midst of so much mediocre writing, however, there are a few books of real distinction. Rumer Godden, whose earlier novel, Black Narcissus, is still remembered, has returned, in Kingfishers Catch Fire, to an Indian setting. This is the story of Sophie Ward, a confused but charming young widow, and her two young children. She insists, in spite of the entreaties of her relatives and the warnings of native friends, that her future happiness and security are pledged to a little villa in the beautiful Vale of Kashmir. She makes a brave if foolhardy stand against the difficulties of the lonely, baffling country and its people, and her experiences are turned by Miss Godden into a dramatic and intriguing novel.

Pearl Buck's latest story of the East is Come, My Beloved, the saga of an American family of missionaries in India. David McArd, a nineteenth century millionaire, is inspired to carry the Christian doctrine "to the fields and missions," and, to speed his plan, he builds a school to train missionaries. The author follows the McArd family through four generations of futile attempts to impose a "militant and sterile" Christianity on the Indians. Each successive McArd fails, when he finds himself faced with the fact that he must accept the native as his brother if he wishes to impress his convictions on the people. Ted McArd, who has refused to allow his daughter to marry an Indian doctor, realizes his failure and is conscience stricken. But the doctor sounds a note of hope when he says that "Time and the generations work together with fate."

The Vermilion Gate, a romantic novel of China by Lin Yutang, presents the theme, and not a new one, of the conflict between old age and youth; of an aged scholar, a young girl and a brilliant journalist caught in the snares of an ancient civilization. The scholar dies and the girl and her lover rush into each other's arms. There is an inevitable parting, and the newspaper man goes deep into Chinese Turkestan during the threatened re-

volt of Ma Chung-ying in the early nineteen-thirties. While the narrative of *Vermilion Gate* is not well paced, and some of the characters seem unreal, the author brings to the surface the "delicate brutality" of the Chinese, and interpolates in the narrative many charming essays on the art of living and of nature.

### Modern Romance

Romantic fiction, with "love for love's sake" as the primary theme is becoming more and more rare. As a pleasant departure from problem novels, this pair of novels is selected for pure entertainment.

Westward the Sun, by Geoffrey Cotterell, is the story of Linda Ferrer, a London girl who sees no future for herself beyond marriage with a neighborhood shop foreman, or life with her family in their crowded, shabby, badly bombed house. But Linda can dream, and the object of her dreams is a handsome young Oxonian who hardly knows that she exists. To complicate Linda's emotional outlook further, an American soldier falls in love with her and, almost before she knows her own mind she finds herself on the way to Colorado and a wedding. This is a brightly written, entertaining tale of England in the days of the buzz bombs, and of America as seen through the eyes of a cockney war bride.

Rosamond Lehmann, author of *Dusty Answer*, tells in her sixth novel, *The Echoing Grove*, a startling, eternal triangle story of two sisters who have been in love with the same man. Madeliene's husband, Rickie, though he is not essentially a weak man, leaves his beautiful, demanding wife and their two children to live with Dinah, younger and more impulsive than her sister, and less stable. Later, Rickie returns to Madeliene and dies, not so much from his incurable illness, the reader gathers, as from pure discouragement over the state of confusion in his life and loves. The last half of the book deals with the two sisters who are bound together by their memories. Through their conversations the real Rickie emerges, his character brought out by small, subtle touches.

## Masculine Quests

The Adventures of Augie March, by Saul Bellow, is the odyssey of a modern Candide, flitting like a migratory bird as fate and fancy dictate. Augie, a child of the Chicago slums, sets out

on a series of experiences that would leave the average young man battered and torn. But not Augie. He bounces away from life's snares, using each adventure as a stepping stone to the next, until he meets Leta and falls madly in love. When Leta leaves him his feathers droop momentarily but, in true Augie fashion, he bounces back to finish the final lap of his odyssey. Mr. Bellow, who asserts that "no one should be condemned to one place," wrote Augie while touring the world. Perhaps it is the sense of motion and migration experienced by the author that makes this his best and most exciting novel.

The quest of Paul Mathray, who has always been known as Paul Burgess, to exonerate his father who is in prison for murder, is the basis for A. J. Cronin's novel, *Beyond This Place*. Paul, a student at the University of Belfast, discovers his true identity when he tries to get his mother to give him his birth certificate. Feeling that the father he vaguely remembers could never have committed such a crime, Paul sets out on a difficult and dangerous mission to find the real murderer, assisted by a girl and an alert young newspaper man. Dr. Cronin, whose works have been compared with those of Dickens and Balzac, has written an absorbing novel, of the same high quality as *Hatter's Castle* and *The Citadel*.

Charles Anderson, of James Hilton's *Time and Time Again*, is a British career diplomat in quest of an important post, such as Ambassador to the United States. Anderson, who has all the polished elegance of his caste, has dedicated his life to grooming himself for such a position. On the rare occasions when he steps out of character he does so with a genteel equanimity that can cast no reflection on himself, his family, or his country. When he fails in his quest, he accepts defeat with the same outward aplomb, but with a wistfulness that makes him appealingly human. All along, he admits, he had terrible nightmares of appearing at state functions improperly dressed.

### Fiction Omnibus

This program is designed to give a round-up of a group of popular novels. It may be presented as one program, by one or several persons or it may be divided into several separate programs. If presented as a whole, five minutes should be allowed for the discussion of each book and its author. The following general suggestions may be applied to reviewing each book.

Give a brief sketch of the author's life, including a discussion of earlier works.

Describe the country, or section of the country in which the scene of the book is laid. Bring out any social or political aspects of the book that may be pertinent.

Discuss the author's style, reading selected passages to illustrate your points.

Compare the book with others in the group.

### 1. Facing East

Kingfishers Catch Fire, by Rumer Godden Come, My Beloved, by Pearl Buck The Vermilion Gate, by Lin Yutang

### 2. Modern Romance

Westward the Sun, by Geoffrey Cotterell The Echoing Grove, by Rosamond Lehmann

### 3. Masculine Quests

The Adventures of Augie March, by Saul Bellow Beyond This Place, by A. J. Cronin Time and Time Again, by James Hilton

### Additional Reading:

Cress Delahanty, by Jessamyn West Landscape of the Heart, by Lettie Rogers The Enchanted Cup, by Dorothy James Roberts The Second Happiest Day, by John Phillips 311 Congress Court, by Richard Sullivan

## PROGRAM III CEILING UNLIMITED

When I dip't into the future, far as human eye could see; Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be; Saw the heavens filled with commerce, argosies of magic sails, Pilot of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales. Tennyson, Locksley Hall

That the fulfillment of Tennyson's prophecy depended on him, and on others of his kind, no one was more aware than the young flyer who sat in his vibrating monoplane on one dark and foggy morning. Dim lights flickered through the gloom, and around the little plane a group of raincoated men stood silent and tense. with "life and death" mirrored in their faces. "Thirty revolutions low-a tail wind, soft runway, and overload!" Theoretically, under ideal conditions, the plane should take off, but "Wind, weather, power, overload." Many times, while barnstorming from a cow-pasture, the pilot had balanced these elements against the intangible elements of his own perception—"experience, instinct. intuition." He buckled his safety belt, waved to the reporters, and rose from the field to begin the first non-stop flight between America and Europe. Thirty-three hours and thirty minutes later Charles A. Lindbergh landed at Le Bourget, his mission accomplished and his dream fulfilled. In The Spirit of St. Louis Lindbergh tells of his flight, and of the planning that made it possible, in a tense and sensitively written narrative that testifies not only to his own abilities, but to the courage and resourcefulness of man.

Some twenty-five years after Lindbergh's flight, a giant passenger plane takes off from Honolulu for San Francisco on a routine flight, with twenty-one "souls" aboard. The High and the Mighty, by Ernest Gann, is a novel of modern commercial aviation, and of the men who control and fly the planes; heirs of Tennyson's prophecy and of the early "pilots of the purple twilight" who prepared the way. Specifically, it is the story of a flight that did not turn out to be routine after all. Everyone aboard is preoccupied with personal problems, with conflicts within themselves, with decisions to be made before reaching their destination. None has the problem of the responsibility that faces Captain Sullivan, a veteran pilot with personal anxie-

ties of his own, when engine trouble and bad weather strike the ship after the point-of-no-return has been reached. Like Lindbergh, Sullivan pits his perception and his skill against almost insurmountable technical problems, and he wins for himself and all aboard a moral and physical victory.

### 1. Historic Flight

The Spirit of St. Louis, by Charles A. Lindbergh

Give a sketch of Lindbergh's life, before and since the flight to France. Discuss briefly We, his earlier book.

Give a very brief summary of the history of aviation up to 1927. What was the significance of the trans-Atlantic flight?

Give a résumé of *The Spirit of St. Louis*. Discuss the author's style. Discuss the question of perception versus logic as brought out in the book.

### Additional Reading:

We, by Charle A. Lindbergh
The Amazing Mr. Doolittle, by Quentin Reynolds

### 2. High, Blue Yonder

The High and the Mighty, by Ernest Gann

Give a brief sketch of the author's life, and of his earlier works.

Contrast aviation today with flying in Lindbergh's day.

Give a résumé of The High and the Mighty, pointing out how the crisis arising on the flight changed the lives of the people on board.

How is the issue of sentient man against science brought out? Do you find the same issue expressed in *The Spirit of St. Louis?* 

### Additional Reading:

Flight Into Space, by Jonathan Norton Leonard Ceiling Unlimited, by Lloyd Morris and Kendall Smith I Fly as I Please, by Marion Rice Hart

### PROGRAM IV

## "LAST GREAT WAR BETWEEN GENTLEMEN"

What with all the literary psychiatrists bent on giving the South a check-up, it was inevitable that the War Between the States should get a probing. Since it had to be, no one, perhaps, could have produced a more "fascinating, scoundrelly," debunking report than James Street in The Civil War. Mr. Street gleefully exposes his historical discoveries, shattering by the wholesale "the myths and romantic tomfool ideas—including the beloved inaccuracies we all learned at grandma's knee." Starting off with; "Even now we can't agree on a name for our Civil War Between the States," he races through the whole unhappy affair, carrying the coals from Northern to Southern lines with impartial mischievousness and vindictiveness. Take, for example, Winston Churchill's remark that the Civil War was "the last great war between gentlemen." "What was civil about it?" Street yells. "It was a national schizophrenia . . . a monstrous metamorphosis." Mr. Street doesn't like to hear the War spoken of as glorious either. "Our glorious hour? Balderdash! It was our dirtiest and most stupid." Bringing the moral issue into the open, Street says, "Let's face it; slavery caused the War.. and the South was wrong." But to even the score, the Yankees get their full share of name-calling; "rampaging abolitionists, grafters, draft-dodgers, and scheming politicians." Although the North and the South "shake hands for history's camera," Mr. Street does not think that they have ever forgiven each other. The author, a puckish Mississippian who lives now in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, obviously enjoyed writing The Civil War. Although it should not be taken too seriously as history, the book contains much historical fact as well as a great deal of good common sense.

Richard O'Connor's Sheridan the Inevitable, is the absorbing story of General Phil Sheridan's spectacular career drawn, for the most part, from his own papers in the Library of Congress. Sheridan, a small, inconspicuous looking man, had an unimpressive record at public school and at West Point. At the beginning of the War he was still a lieutenant at the age of thirty, and his first assignments were desk jobs which he carried out with no marked talent. After Shiloh Sheridan was given a com-

bat post and promoted from captain to colonel, thus beginning a rapid series of promotions that brought him at fifty-two to the rank of Commander of the United States Army. In the interval, action brought out Sheridan's innate qualities of leadership. His one aim was to attack and to keep hammering away until the enemy was reduced. "Either whip the enemy or get whipped yourself," was a characteristic order made to a lagging cavalry officer during a battle with Jubal Early. "Forward, everything! Don't stop! Go on!" was his credo, and to his credit are brilliant feats at Booneville, Chickamauga, Five Forks, Missionary Ridge, Appomattox and post-war Indian campaigns. That Sheridan was less impressive in peace than in war is a matter of history, but his establishment of the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth is a monument to his vision.

Ben Ames Williams, in the last novel written before his death in 1952, takes up the story of the Currans in *House Divided*, to carry them to Louisiana and through the Reconstruction period. Readers who enjoyed the first novel may discover in its sequel, *The Unconquered*, what happened to Trav and his unpredictable wife Edith; to General Longstreet who figured so prominently in the first volume; to Tony and Sapphira, Cindy and Brett, and other relatives and friends of the family. Lucy Curran and her marriage to Captain Page, who fought with the Northern Army, supply the principal romantic theme. The author transfers the scene to Louisiana, partly to show Reconstruction at its worst, and partly because of General Longstreet's activities in and around New Orleans. Although as a piece of fiction *The Unconquered* is often cumbersome, the history is authentic and the period colorful.

Historians have paid little attention to Mary Custis Lee, the wife of General Robert E. Lee, but Harnett Kane, in his Lady of Arlington, has written a fitting tribute to a brave and charming woman. The great-granddaughter of Martha Washington, rich, sheltered and born to tradition, Mary Custis defied her family to marry the obscure second son of General "Light Horse" Harry Lee. This same spirit sustained her throughout her life; through tragedy, her father's bankruptcy, the War, the illness and death of the General. Lady of Arlington is the story of a happy marriage seen against a varied background of war and peace, army quarters and pillared mansions.

### 1. What's Civil About the Civil War?

The Civil War, by James Street

Discuss Mr. Street's life, with reference to his earlier works.

Discuss the book, bringing out some of the more startling incidents as debunked by the author.

Like Southern Accent, this is a book to be read aloud. Select your favorite passages for reading to the group.

Do you feel that Mr. Street has been unduly harsh toward the South? The North?

Give brief reviews of Sheridan, The Unconquered, and Lady of Arlington, with short biographical sketches of each author. Do these books bear out, in any way, Mr. Street's opinion of the War?

Sheridan the Inevitable, by Richard O'Connor The Unconquered, by Ben Ames Williams Lady of Arlington, by Harnett Kane

### Additional Reading:

The Raid, by Laurence Greene Storm Haven, by Frank G. Slaughter

### PROGRAM V

## "IS IT TRUE WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT DIXIE?"

"What is the South? What is the South doing? What is the South thinking? What is the South becoming?" William T. Polk, North Carolina newspaper editor, asks these questions and answers them in his Southern Accent, interpreting with wit and insight the enigma that is Dixie. The author, who says that his book is written out of "love, shame, admiration, perplexity and fascination," does a thorough job of dissecting his region, "from Uncle Remus to Oak Ridge," and putting it all back together again. His most important conclusion is that "there are two separate Souths; the old agricultural society with its feudal overtones and a new aggressive industrialized brand." Gerald Johnson says of Southern Accent: "It is poetic, sardonic, erudite and wise—above all, healthy." There is not much to add to such praise, except to say that this is a book to be read aloud; like a good meal, it is too good to be enjoyed alone.

The Plantation, by Ovid Pierce, is a quiet, beautifully written novel of "the old agricultural society" that still pursues its peaceful way in the flat lands of Eastern North Carolina. It is the story of "Mr. Ed." Ruffin, who inherits the plantation and a house full of dependent female relatives while he is a law student at the University. The young planter leaves school and comes home to assume his responsibilities as head of the family, living out his long and lonely life in dignity and serenity. In this, his first novel, Mr. Pierce illustrates the gentle wearing away that time brings to life and property, but the Ruffins and their Negroes are gentry to the end—and there is "little Bill," "Mr. Ed's" stepson to offer the hope of a new generation.

In sharp contrast to Mr. Pierce's story of an older, landed society, Edna Lee has written *The Southerners*, an exciting novel based on the emergence of a new order in the industrial South. Atlanta is the scene, from the turn of the century to the beginning of World War I. Wisely, the author has balanced the old way of life against the new, to bring the changes and their significance into clearer focus. The story is told through Jessica Kildare who marries a rich, dissipated cotton mill owner, and who takes over control of the mills at his death. Jessica, with her energy and her determination to improve conditions for the

workers, is doing her part to destroy the "feudal overtones" of the old society.

Too often fiction writers, and again we quote Mr. Polk, "have peopled the South with sadists, masochists, rapists," and other abnormal and fantastic figures. And it must be admitted that the abnormal makes for easier writing and, often, for a more readable narrative. Eudora Welty, in telling the story of Edna Earle, a small-town southern girl and her eccentric Uncle Dan. in The Ponder Heart, has weighed the practical, bossy, hoydenish niece against the amiable lunacy of Uncle Dan. And, in so doing, she has written a well-balanced novel of middle-class society in the average little town of the Deep South. Edna, who runs a small hotel and talks to any and everyone who will listen, forces a travelling salesman to hear the family history, in a garrulous, head-tossing monologue that smacks of the female scolds of the English classics. And as she rambles on she brings to life all the ramifications of family and society in her Mississippi town. First published in the New Yorker, this is a small masterpiece by one of America's most gifted story-tellers.

### 1. What is the South?

This program on the South is intended to bring into focus the period between the Civil War and the present.

Southern Accent, by William T. Polk

Give a brief sketch of the author's life, and his career as a writer.

Give a résumé of each chapter, bringing out the author's most important points.

Discuss Mr. Polk's definition of the South.

Read as many passages aloud as possible, with particular attention to the opening paragraphs of the book.

Give brief reviews of *The Plantation*, *The Southerners*, and *The Ponder Heart*. Do you think that these novels reflect the South in a more realistic way than the books of Caldwell, Faulkner and Lillian Smith? Relate the theme of each book to points made in *Southern Accent*.

The Plantation, by Ovid Pierce The Southerners, by Edna Lee

The Ponder Heart, by Eudora Welty

## Additional Reading:

Taw Jameson, by May Davies Martinet The Sounding Brass, by Edythe Latham The Kingpin, by Tom Wicker

### PROGRAM VI

### VARIEGATED RECOLLECTIONS

One of the pleasantest aspects of growing older is the opportunity to look back over the changes that have occurred in people and places. When a writer has the ability to record these memories with clarity and without mawkishness, his observations are often delightful to hear and to read. Such recollections are found in Gwen Raverat's *Period Piece*, in *The Glass of Fashion* by Cecil Beaton, and in Dr. Mary Martin Sloop's autobiography as told to LeGette Blythe in *Miracle of the Hills*.

Mrs. Raverat had the distinction of living in late Victorian Cambridge and the advantage of having such distinguished and colorful relations as the Darwins, the Wedgwoods and the Jebbs, to use as material for *Period Piece*. She has written with gaiety and meticulous accuracy of her lovable and often eccentric family and the world in which they lived. Her book, she says, is "circular." It "does not begin at the beginning and go on to the end; it is going on at the same time, sticking out like the spokes of a wheel, the hub of which is me." Mrs. Raverat has written a jewel of a book, charming to look at, with the author's pen and ink drawings, and entrancing to read.

Cecil Beaton, recollecting the past fifty years in his *Glass of Fashion*, re-captures esthetic and social history through trends in dress, adornment, interior decoration, cuisine, and feminine beauty. His reflections are spiked with vivid character studies and anecdotes, not all of them confined to the fashionable society with which his name is usually associated. Gaby Deslys of the music halls, Sarah Bernhardt, Mrs. Philip Lydig, "the masterpiece of civilization," and many other famous figures of the past and present are presented here with the sometimes deceptive magic of this celebrated portrait photographer.

Far removed from Victorian England and even farther from the glittering world of Cecil Beaton are the homespun recollections of Dr. Mary Martin Sloop of Crossnore, North Carolina. If, as Dr. Sloop admits, her recollections in *Miracle of the Hills* are related "haphazardly", her life as companion and assistant to her husband, Dr. Eustace Sloop, has been one of steady achievement in purpose and accomplishment. More than forty years ago the two doctors rode into the Carolina mountains to

attack disease, poverty, illiteracy and kindred ills in the lonely, primitive village of Crossnore. Young and "tough as pine knots," they set out to perform a miracle of enlightenment and progress in the little settlement where life was almost unbelievably crude. Operating on a kitchen table by the flickering light of kerosene lamps was one sort of problem, but the social climate in which moonshiners flourished and child marriage was common, was another. It is pleasant to know that the doctors Sloop lived to see their "miracle" unfold, and Crossnore become a clean and thriving town, with a hospital, a "fine school", a new church and good roads. Mr. Blythe, who recorded much of Dr. Sloop's story on tape before writing the manuscript, has wisely let his subject speak her own piece about herself, her husband, and their mountain home.

### 1. Growing Up in Cambridge

Period Piece, by Gwen Raverat

Give a brief sketch of the author's life and of her distinguished relations. Comment on her work as an artist.

Give a brief description of late Victorian Cambridge, and the life in faculty circles. Discuss the social attitudes of the time.

Read passages dealing with some of the outstanding characters, such as Mama, grandfather Charles Darwin, Aunt Etty, and others.

Discuss the circular technique used by the author. Did you find it effective?

Additional Reading:

Left Hand, Right Hand, by Sir Osbert Sitwell

### 2. To the Ladies

The Glass of Fashion, by Cecil Beaton

Give a brief sketch of the author's life, mentioning his various accomplishments. Describe the social circles in which he moves.

Comment on Beaton's style of portrait photography and painting.

Trace the fashions in dress, adornment, decoration and so on, as brought out in the book, showing the changes that have taken place in the past fifty years.

Compare the recollections of Beaton and Mrs. Raverat, pointing out the contrast between the two periods as seen through the records of the two authors.

Additional Reading:

Ballet, by Cecil Beaton

### 3. Homespun Chronicle

Miracle of the Hills, by Dr. Mary Martin Sloop and LeGette Blythe

Give a short account of Mr. Blythe's life and earlier works. Why is he particularly fitted to write this biography?

Describe the settlement of Crossnore as it was in the early twentieth century. Discuss the origins of the people, and the reason for their primitive, poverty-stricken lives.

Describe the early struggles of the Sloops, the ways in which they accomplished their "miracle," and their final achievements.

Select significant passages for reading aloud.

### Additional Reading:

Cabins in the Laurel, by Muriel Earley Sheppard The Little Benders, by Joe Knox

### PROGRAM VII

### SHORT STORIES REREAD

What is the short story, and what is its relationship to the novel? A. E. Coppard, in the foreword to his Collected Tales gives an interesting answer to these questions: "The relationship of the short story to the novel amounts to nothing at all. The novel is a distinct form of art having a pedigree and practice of hardly more than a couple of hundred years; the short story, so far from being its offspring, is an original art originating in the folk tale, which was a thing of joy even before writing, not to mention printing, was invented." The modern short story, Mr. Coppard adds, should conform "to that ancient tradition of being spoken to you, rather than being read at you." The author's own work is rich in such folk tale characteristics, and the discriminating reader will be fascinated by this collection of thirty-eight tales selected from a group of two hundred, written between 1921 The subjects would have delighted any ancient teller and 1938. of tales; they are stories of the supernatural, humorous and earthy yarns, fantasies, anecdotes and realistic stories, each one related with the author's peculiar poetic quality.

Rudyard Kipling, one of the most popular, and at the same time, one of the most controversial of English writers is, like Coppard, a master story teller. His insight, his uncanny accuracy, and his skillful use of words have so stamped his writings with his own personality that, although he has often been parodied, he is almost impossible to imitate. T. S. Eliot has recently brought out a collection of his poetry and now Somerset Maugham, in Maugham's Choice of Kipling's Best, has rediscovered Kipling's prose. This collection is focused on the early stories that were written when the author was a young newspaper man in India, and Maugham says of them, "They give you a tang of the East, the smell of the bazaars, the torpor of the rains . . . the rough life of the barracks in which the occupying troops were quartered." And to many of us these tales will bring back the days when we first discovered Kipling, and travelled with him through an exotic and wonderful world of British officers and their ladies, dark-skinned natives, and rough, tough soldiers of the Queen.

O. Henry, although he never attained the literary stature of

Coppard or of his contemporary, Kipling, created in his own right a type of short story with the characteristics of the folk tale or, to go a step further, of the tall tale. O. Henry, like Kipling, wrote of life as he saw it about him, but, unlike Kipling. he retouched his world with the romantic glow of romance, illusion and make-believe. A student of Mark Twain, Bret Harte and Frank Stockton, he relied on the sleight-of-hand, trick ending for dramatic effect, and to his adventure-hungry audience he brought sophistication, romance and exaggerated good humor. O. Henry's characters were "gentlemanly cynics and honorable rascals." living unconventional lives, but showing always an intense respect for the conventional. His people might be blackguards at heart, but their creator gave them a veneer of artificial delicacy, so that their words and actions never even bordered on the risqué. The Complete Works of O. Henry, with a foreword by William Lyon Phelps, is a fitting tribute to a writer who. whatever his shortcomings, left such perennial favorites as The Gift of the Magi, Roads of Destiny, The Cop and the Anthem, and so many others.

### 1. A Master of Fantasy

The Collected Tales of A. E. Coppard, by A. E. Coppard

Give a short account of the author's life, his place in literature, and his other writings.

Discuss the short story, and comment on Coppard's theories of short story writing.

Tell or read your favorite story from this collection.

## Additional Reading:

Kiss Me Again, Stranger, by Daphne du Maurier The Short Stories of Saki, by H. H. Munro

### 2. Of Barracks and Bazaars

Maugham's Choice of Kipling's Best, by Somerset Maugham

Discuss briefly Maugham's career and his works.

Give a sketch of Kipling's life, mentioning some of his major works not included in this collection.

Read selected passages from the stories, and discuss the author's style, his choice of subjects, and the Indian background.

Compare the Kipling stories with those of Coppard.

## Additional Reading:

Something of Myself, by Rudyard Kipling A Passage to India, by E. M. Forster

### 3. Voice of the City

The Complete Works of O. Henry, edited by William Lyon Phelps
Give a sketch of O. Henry's life and background.
Contrast the works of Coppard, Kipling and O. Henry. Show how
O. Henry lacks the literary artistry of the other two.

What is the value of O. Henry's stories. Why are they still read? Read aloud or summarize your favorite story, pointing out the tricks of style, the surprise ending, etc.

### Additional Reading:

O. Henry: the Man and His Work, by E. Hudson Long Some Faces in the Crowd, by Budd Schulberg

## PROGRAM VIII THE LIGHT TOUCH

Shirley Jackson and her husband, their four children, an assortment of cats and dogs, and thousands of books live "behind the four white pillars of a big white house in North Bennington, Vermont." Here is the raw material that the author has used in her irresistibly funny *Life Among the Savages*. By way of introducing her family and the daily pandemonium on which she looks in such high good humor, she says: "Our house in Vermont is old and noisy and full. When we moved into it from a New York City apartment we had two children and about five thousand books; I expect when we finally overflow and move out again we will perhaps have twenty children and easily five hundred thousand books." If the Jacksons should acquire sixteen more "little savages" as she so casually suggests, we hope that she will find time to admit her readers once more to the scenes of so much lively domestic comedy.

Father, Dear Father is Ludwig Bemelmans' fourteenth volume, but it is no less wise and charming than Hansi, written in 1934. Mr. Bemelmans, who knows all about hotels—he was born in one, has lived in them nearly all his life, and has written about them most delightfully—begins his latest book with a floating hotel, the S.S. America, en route from New York to Cherbourg. With him are his thirteen-year-old daughter Barbara and her toy French poodle, Little Bit. Father, Dear Father is a lively account of a tour through France, Switzerland and Italy; about food, cooks and crooks, penniless noblemen, taxi drivers, and some of the most beautiful scenery in the world. Barbara, who carries canned spaghetti to Italy, and who is almost aggressively the American abroad, cannot always understand her bohemian father's choice of friends and associates. The truth is that "Poppy" loves everybody, and everybody loves "Poppy." Illustrated with what The New Yorker calls "the author's heroically undisciplined drawings," this has all the familiar Bemelmans fascination. It reads like letters from a gently worldly, and highly literate friend; candid, sometimes melancholy, and always witty.

### 1. Family Scramble

Life Among the Savages, by Shirley Jackson

Give a brief sketch of the author's life and her career as a writer. Mention her famous short story, *The Lottery*.

Describe the "old, noisy and full" house in Vermont.

Discuss the author's style. Show how she makes her characters and the setting clear to the reader.

This is a book that is meant to be read aloud. Select your favorite passages to read.

### Additional Reading:

The Fastest Hound Dog in the State of Maine, by John Gould Mr. Revere and I, by Robert Lawson

### 2. Europe Rediscovered

Father, Dear Father, by Ludwig Bemelmans

Discuss Mr. Bemelmans' life and his earlier works, both as writer and artist.

Discuss the Bemelmans world, with its mixture of fantasy and reality. Why does Lee Roglow in the *Saturday Review* call Bemelmans an "epicurean pixie?"

Do you feel that the author has been successful in his portrayal of his teen-age daughter? Does Barbara remind you of Booth Tarkington's adolescents?

Give a résumé of the book, reading aloud as many of the more entertaining passages as possible. Let your audience see the illustrations.

## Additional Reading:

Hotel Bemelmans, by Ludwig Bemelmans Thurber Country, by James Thurber The Private Dining Room, by Ogden Nash

### PROGRAM IX

### PRESENTING THOMAS WOLFE

Today, some sixteen years after the death of Thomas Wolfe. his devotees and his detractors are still fascinated by the man "who bestrode American literature like a colossus." To present him, "but not to read his riddle," Richard Walser, in The Enigma of Thomas Wolfe, has turned to Wolfe's friends and associates. and to leading literary critics for their opinions. Here, in one intensely interesting volume, is "the man in all his sympathy and greatness, even his awkardness and perplexity, reviews of and comments on some of his books, and essays of critical writers generally viewing Wolfe's complete output by focusing on some special phase of his talent." In his preface Mr. Walser quotes William Faulkner, who says of Wolfe, "He may have had the best talent of us, he may have been 'the greatest American writer' if he had lived longer, though I never have held much with the 'mute inglorious Milton' theory; I believe it all gets said; that is, unless you are run down by a hit-and-run car, you say what you are capable of before you can persuade yourself to let go and die." In the first section of the book Mr. Walser lets Thomas Wolfe write his own biography. Don Bishop tells of Wolfe the student at Chapel Hill; Richard S. Kennedy follows him through Harvard: Henry T. Vokening was his friend while he was teaching at New York University; John Skally Terry writes of Wolfe and Maxwell Perkins; William Braswell goes with him on a lecture tour and a holiday, and Jonathan Daniels discusses him as "Poet of the Boom." The final section of the book is devoted to reviewers and essayists; Robert Penn Warren, Henry Seidel Canby, Bernard De Voto, Clifton Fadiman and others. The opinions of these contributors are a mixture of praise and attack, for, to quote the editor, "The selections are not designed to exculpate the novelist, but simply to present him . . . The book is rather a contest with the reader acting as the entire committee of iudges."

Thomas Wolfe's mother, the Eliza Gant of Look Homeward Angel, was an extraordinary woman, as fantastic in her own way as any of her son's fictional characters. In The Marble Man's Wife, a record of conversations with Hayden Norwood, she relates anecdotes about herself, her family, and their life in the

dreary boarding house that Wolfe resented so bitterly. She says very little about Tom, but the book is rewarding, not only as the self-portrait of an energetic, strong-willed, strangely likeable woman, but as an illuminating glimpse into Wolfe's heritage, and the source of many of the incidents and characters that appeared in his books.

### 1. Views of a Genius

The Enigma of Thomas Wolfe, by Richard Walser

Give a brief discussion of Richard Walser and his work.

Sketch briefly Wolfe's life, his background, his novels, and his place in literature.

Divide *The Enigma* into three sections, discussing each section and summarizing some of the contrasting opinions of his character and his writings.

Select passages to read aloud, including parts of the author's preface. If possible review one of Wolfe's novels, discussing the style and the subject matter.

### 2. Mother of a Genius

The Marble Man's Wife, by Hayden Norwood

Describe Julia Wolfe as her character is revealed in her conversation.

Describe the Wolfe house in Asheville, the town, the other members of the family.

If you have read Look Homeward Angel, contrast Julia Wolfe with her fictional counterpart, Eliza Gant.

It is said that Thomas Wolfe never freed himself from the emotional domination of his mother. After reading the book do you feel that this may very well have been true?

## Additional Reading:

Thomas Wolfe, by Agatha Boyd Adams

The Hungry Gulliver, by Pamela Hansford Johnson

Wolfe's Letters to His Mother, by Thomas Wolfe

Thomas Wolfe at Washington Square, by Thomas Clark Pollock and Oscar Cargill

The Correspondence of Thomas Wolfe and Homer Andrew Watt, edited by Oscar Cargill and Thomas Clark Pollock

The Portable Thomas Wolfe, edited by Maxwell Geismar

### PROGRAM X

### OUT OF AFRICA

Those of you who have read Cry the Beloved Country need no introduction to Alan Paton's cadenced prose or to his compassionate understanding of man's tragedy and error. Too Late the Phalarope, Mr. Paton's second novel, is focused on the stern. puritanical nature of the Afrikaners and their uncompromising attitude toward human weakness. It is the story of Jakob van Vlaanderen, a righteous, strong-willed Boer and of his son Pieter. handsome, brave, and highly respected by the whites and blacks in the community for his prowess as a football player as well as for his abilities as a police official. The social code of the van Vlaanderens and their world is that of their ancestors, demanding complete segregation of the races, and the penalty for breaking the code is disgrace "worse than death." Pieter, yielding to an irresistible temptation, oversteps the rigid barrier of race, and his story, as told by Sophie, his maiden aunt who loves and understands him, moves swiftly and surely to disaster. "Perhaps I could have saved him, but I held my peace", Sophie cries over and over again. But no one could have saved Pieter from Stephanie, the Negro girl who could give him the passionate response that he never found in Nella, his wife. Pieter's weakness and his inner rebellion against the harsh restrictions of Boer society make him easy prey for Stephanie, and his downfall is the downfall of all the Vlaanderens.

Nadine Gordimer and Alan Paton come from the same part of the "explosive" continent, but Miss Gordimer writes of the English in South Africa, who have embraced the racial beliefs of their Boer neighbors, if not their strictly Calvinistic morality. The Lying Days, Miss Gordimer's first novel, is an absorbing account of "white man's crying to hold on to white supremacy," as seen through the eyes of a sensitive young girl, Helen Shaw. As the daughter of a gold mine official in the Johannesburg section, Helen has been brought up in the conventional atmosphere of middle-class, Anglo-African society. At the mine she has seen the white man at his worst, and watched with shame the "rapacious exploitation" of the blacks. Finally, she revolts against the attitudes of her family and her class. At the university in Johannesburg she plunges deep into an exciting world of

new ideas and new people, and into a love affair with Paul Clark, a social worker who shows her African life as she had never seen it in her sheltered childhood. The relationship with Paul does not last, and Helen, thoroughly disillusioned but accepting disillusion "as a beginning rather than the end," leaves Africa for England, but with a promise to come back. She has found real love with Joel Aaron, "the only one who has not discarded everything and found nothing." The Lying Days, written in the first person, is perhaps more biography than conventional novel. Through Helen, Miss Gordimer, in her beautiful, precise prose, presents her unhappy country and its complex society in all its bleak, unadorned reality. The book is a worthy successor to the young author's collection of short stories, The Soft Voice of the Serpent, published in 1952.

### 1. South African Setting

Too Late the Phalarope, by Alan Paton

Give a brief sketch of the author's life and of his earlier novel.

Sketch briefly the history of the Boers.

Discuss their stern moral code, and compare their social and religious traditions with those of the American Puritans.

Describe the South Africa of which Mr. Paton writes, and discuss the "explosive" elements of social and political life there.

Review Too Late the Phalarope, reading aloud selected passages to illustrate the author's style.

Compare the theme of Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter with that of Too Late the Phalarope.

Additional Reading:

The Scarlet Letter, by Nathaniel Hawthorne Struggle for Africa, by Vernon Bartlett Mittee, by Daphne Rooke

### 2. Tension and Rebellion

The Lying Days, by Nadine Gordiner

Give a brief sketch of the author's life and discuss her earlier book of short stories.

Describe the mine village in which Helen grows up; the English middle class atmosphere of the white community, and the primitive, provertystricken condition of the blacks.

Discuss Helen's experiences at the University; the impact on her of new ideas, and her response to them.

Read selected passages aloud, to show how the author conveys atmosphere.

Do you feel that Helen is justified in her revolt against the traditions of her own society? Does she solve her problems successfully?

Compare Too Late the Phalarope and The Lying Days from the literary point of view; from the point of view of theme.

### Additional Reading:

The Soft Voice of the Serpent, by Nadine Gordimer Blanket Boy, by Peter Lanham and A. S. Mopeli-Paulus The People of South Africa, by Sarah Gertrude Millin

### PROGRAM XI

### FOOTLIGHTS' ENCHANTMENT

The theatre, recently, has received its share of literary applause through a number of outstanding books on actors, dramatists, composers, and general theatrical history. Two of the most notable examples have been Eleanor Ruggles' biography of Edwin Booth and Deems Taylor's account of Rodgers and Hammerstein and their works.

Edwin Booth, "the melancholy prince," was born with a caul and so destined, according to an old wives' tale, to luck, and "to see sperrits." Booth was certainly born to success, but he knew trial and bitter tragedy as well as triumph, and Miss Ruggles, in The Prince of Players, has told his story with compassion and discernment. In addition, she has traced the history of the family, beginning with the fantastic English actor, Junius Brutus Booth who deserted a wife and son to flee to America with young Mary Ann Holmes. Their children, Edwin, the ill-fated John Wilkes, Junius Brutus, Asia, and the rest were born on a Maryland farm. Edwin's childhood, his long, patient pilgrimages as his father's "keeper" and understudy; his rise to be the "greatest genius of the American stage"; his romances and his marriage; his fellow actors Henry Irving and Joseph Jefferson; Lincoln's assassination and the family disgrace and sorrow that followed; all the times and places Booth knew from 1840 to 1892 are here in the searching study of a man "who was idolized by millions, and only a handfull knew."

When, in January 1954, South Pacific ended a Broadway run of almost five years, the curtain was not "rung down"—perhaps it never will be, for the incomparable Rodgers and Hammerstein had added still another sparkling musical play to a repertory that included Carousel and the record-breaking Oklahoma. Some Enchanted Evenings, by Deems Taylor, is an engaging biography of Richard Rodgers the composer and Oscar Hammerstein, 2nd, the lyricist, as well as being an informal history of the musical stage from the nineteen-twenties to the present. Rodgers, whose only other partner was Moss Hart, and Hammerstein, who wrote the lyrics for Rose Marie, The Desert Song and Show Boat, work together in such complete harmony that theirs is a collaboration of dramatic and musical quality un-

equaled since the days of Gilbert and Sullivan. The partners, individually as well as together, have known the ups and downs of theatrical life, with emphasis on the "ups," and as a team they have scored an almost continuous success. Mr. Taylor's book is like a Rodgers and Hammerstein production, filled with warmth and gaiety and color. Written by a man who is both composer and music critic, this is a lively and authentic study of two of the leading figures in the theatrical world of our day.

### 1. Melancholy Prince

Prince of Players, by Eleanor Ruggles

Give a brief sketch of the author's life and of her earlier works.

Discuss the history of the Booth family, beginning with Junius Brutus the elder; his early life in London, his flight to America and the years in Maryland.

Discuss the theatre of Edwin Booth's time; popular plays and actors; styles of acting.

Give a résumé of the book, bringing out the aspects of Booth's life and character that seem most interesting to you.

Select passages to read aloud that will bring out the flavor of the book, or that illuminate the character of Booth or his times.

Additional Reading:

Curtain Time, by Lloyd Morris

### 2. The World of Musical Comedy

Some Enchanted Evenings, by Deems Taylor

Give a brief sketch of the author's life, and his earlier works. Show why he is especially qualified to write this book.

Give brief separate sketches of the lives of Rodgers and Hammerstein before they became partners.

Discuss the partnership, giving the reasons for its success.

Discuss briefly the three outstanding musicals, Oklahoma, Carousel and South Pacific.

Give a résumé of the book, bringing out incidents that you found most interesting.

Read some of your favorite passages aloud.

### Additional Reading:

Behind the Golden Curtain, by Irving Kolodin Vaudeville, by Joseph Laurie

### PROGRAM XII

### INTERNATIONAL NOTES

Theodore White, an American foreign correspondent who has spent fifteen years observing and commenting on world affairs. has written in Fire in the Ashes a discerning, unprejudiced and highly readable report of "a new Europe rising from the ashes of despair, and of America's great adventure as leader of the Western World." Believing that the fate of Europe depends upon developments within England, France and Germany, the author focuses his attention on these three countries. After a general survey of physical, political, economical and moral conditions he turns to a personal study of representative individuals of each country: Joe Curry in England, Pierre Bertaux in France and Willi Shlieker in Germany. Mr. White asks a lot of pertinent questions, and answers them frankly: "What actually happened at the Yalta Conference?" "Has the vast outpouring of American dollars into postwar Europe helped the cause of peace?" "Have we done well in Germany?" "Will England again take the lead in Europe?" This is a thoughtful and, on the whole, a reassuring book.

Eleanor Roosevelt has felt for a long time that the East is tossing about in restless slumber, beginning to awaken at last to its needs and to its strength. In 1952 the opportunity for personal observation came through an invitation from Prime Minister Nehru to spend a few weeks in India. On a whirlwind trip that included stops at important places in the Near and Far East—Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Pakistan and India— Mrs. Roosevelt, as a semi-official guest, enjoyed advantages that are denied to the professional correspondent. In her own Rooseveltian way she visited huts and palaces, bazaars, missions, churches, schools and hospitals, talking to everyone, observing, and making her own shrewd, kindly and completely feminine conclusions. She says, "what hits you in the face wherever you go is the appalling poverty of the people in general, whether peasant or town dweller, a poverty that the average American farmer or worker would find it hard to conceive." When the trip was over, and Mrs. Roosevelt sat down at Hvde Park to write of her trip in India and the Awakening East she found herself faced with an unanswerable question; "Will communism or democracy be the choice of the awakening East?"

When historians finally evaluate the Korean War, I Was a Captive in Korea, by Philip Deane, will surely be considered one of the most important eye-witness accounts of the war from a prisoner's point of view. Mr. Deane, a correspondent for the London Observer, had ample time during his thirty-three months captivity to observe his communist captors from the inside out. He describes, with an amazing lack of bitterness, the horrors of death marches, of physical brutality and of the more subtle cruelty of brain-washing. And he records, as well, incidents of kindness and courage, and even of occasional comedy. Written from notes smuggled out of the country when he was suddenly and unexpectedly freed, this is an honest and quietly moving book.

### 1. Europe and America

Fire in the Ashes, by Theodore H. White

Give a brief sketch of the author's career and mention his earlier works.

Comment on the purpose and scope of the book.

Discuss the relationship of England, France and Germany in the present world situation.

Give a summary of Fire in the Ashes, and tell briefly the stories of Joe Curry, Pierre Bertaux and Willi Schlieker.

Do you think that Mr. White answers satisfactorily his own "pertinent questions?"

## Additional Reading:

War in Korea, by Marguerite Higgins The World and the West, by Arnold Toynbee Secret Conversations, by Adolf Hitler

### 2. A Journey Eastward

India and the Awakening East, by Eleanor Roosevelt

Give a brief sketch of Mrs. Roosevelt's earlier experiences that gave her the background for observing and reporting on social and political conditions.

What was the purpose of her trip?

What countries did Mrs. Roosevelt visit and what were her main conclusions about each country?

What do you consider the importance of the book? Why? Select several of the more important passages to read aloud.

### Additional Reading:

The Hill of Devi, by E. M. Forster Learning Laughter, by Stephen Spender

### 3. Captive of the Communists

### I Was a Captive in Korea, by Philip Deane

Discuss the author's background, and the experiences leading up to his capture.

What important elements are brought out in Mr. Deane's account of captivity? How does this book differ from others of its kind?

Describe the author's experiences, both comic and tragic.

Do you feel that this book is an indictment of war?

Describe the author's journey through Russia on his way home, and his treatment by the Russians. What conclusions did you draw about conditions there?

### Additional Reading:

A Window on Red Square, by Frank Rounds, Jr. The China Tangle, by Herbert Feis

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